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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 001875

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STATE PASS TO USTR FOR RVARGO, CPADILLA, AMALITO

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TAGS: ETRD ECPS ECON PREL PGOV SOCI CS

SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS A MAJORITY OF COSTA RICANS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CAFTA-DR

REF: (A) SAN JOSE 01073

(B) SAN JOSE 01787

**¶1.** Summary. A July 2005 CID/GALLUP poll contracted by the daily newspaper "La Republica" and local television network Repretel reveals a slightly decreasing majority of Costa Ricans support the U.S.-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and believe the agreement will bring at least some benefits to the country. Despite mounting pressure to move forward on this issue, President Pacheco is maintaining a go-slow approach and has not yet sent the agreement to the Legislative Assembly for ratification, the only CAFTA-DR signatory country not to have already done so. End Summary.

**¶2.** CID/Gallup conducted the poll by telephone and personal interviews of 1,230 adults (over 18) from all areas of Costa Rica between July 23 and 30, 2005. The margin of error is stated to be plus or minus 2.8 percent with a 95 percent confidence level. The poll revealed that 67 percent of those polled had heard or read at least "a little" about CAFTA-DR, an increase from 54 in May and 44 percent in February. The knowledge level of CAFTA-DR was proportional to the education level achieved by the respondent; 85 percent of those having at least one year of University-level education had some knowledge of the agreement, 71 percent of those completing their high school studies, and 58 percent of those completing primary education.

**¶3.** As compared to a similar CID/Gallup poll conducted in May 2005 (Ref A), the most recent poll results showed that those who responded that they were "somewhat" or "very much" in favor of CAFTA-DR decreased from 61 to 56 percent. Those who responded that they were "somewhat" or "very much" opposed to the agreement fell from 32 to 30 percent. Since the U.S. approved CAFTA-DR in late July 2005, this issue has been discussed almost daily in the local media. Looking closer into the breakdown of the responses to this question, 21 percent of respondents said they were very much in favor of CAFTA-DR (21 and 23 in May and February, respectively), 35 percent somewhat in favor (40 and 33), 13 percent somewhat opposed (17 and 14), and 17 percent very much opposed (15 and 16).

**¶4.** The poll also asked the following question to those who said they knew at least "a little" of the agreement: "Taking everything into account, how much do you think Costa Rica will benefit from CAFTA-DR?" Responses revealed that 54 percent think that Costa Rica will benefit "a lot" or "some," compared to 53 percent in May 2005. Those who think the country would benefit "little" or "not at all" constituted 33 percent of the responses, down from 39 percent in May. Those having no response or opinion were twelve percent of the respondents, up from nine in May. Responses to a follow-up poll question in this area revealed that 47 percent believe the benefits will be realized in less than three years; 27 percent believe the benefits will be realized between three and five years; and 21 percent responded more than five years.

**¶5.** Comment: Although not directly comparable because of many factors such as the methods of conducting the surveys and the questions asked, the latest UNIMER (Ref B) and CID/Gallup polls show that a strong majority know or have heard about CAFTA-DR. Both recent polls show that a majority of respondents: (1) are in favor of CAFTA-DR, and (2) believe that the agreement will bring benefits to the country.

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